

# Bard

Bard College  
**Bard Digital Commons**

---

Robert Kelly Manuscripts

Robert Kelly Archive

---

9-2003

sepF2003

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "sepF2003" (2003). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 911.  
[http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/911](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/911)

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Robert Kelly Archive at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Robert Kelly Manuscripts by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@bard.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@bard.edu).

# Bard

## YOUNG MAGIC

A girl or two  
trying to remember  
something else  
but nothing's there  
but what they represent

this is called waiting for the bus  
and sometimes lighting a cigarette  
to make it come faster,  
a ritual that works, or  
not saying the name of what you really want

or saying it over and over again  
the love-sign fading  
flushed under the storm cloud  
and one guesses it's only night time  
but the other knows better.

25 September 2003

## **CHART**

Any map will tell you where you are  
if you accept its definition of itself and you.

This is the fatal weakness of philosophy.

25 IX 03

## **EVENT**

small blue violet flowers have come out and spoken

25 IX 03

---

What language am I today?

Cancel the offending words.

25 IX 03

## **SUNRISE IN THE WOODS**

The trees have been trying  
to wake up for years  
but they're too busy living.  
Which is that phase of dying  
where we do all the work.

25 September 2003

## **DEMONSTRATIO**

Pick a number from One to Ten.

Now announce the number you chose.

See which number wins.

This is the meaning of democracy.

The number that most people picked  
must be the truest number of all.

## LOVE SONG

I want to tell you something  
I don't know yet. You want  
to hear nothing but silence  
isn't ready for you yet.  
We have to settle for frustration,  
saying half of what I mean  
and you half-listening.

25 September 2003



## **ALTERNATE AFFIRMATIONS**

Because I did believe  
and it is magic. Because  
I do believe  
and it was normal. Both

become, both are so,  
a man steps out of the shower  
with clean hair  
history catches up with

the least kindness  
nothing is lost but where does it go?  
Chanting your body  
to another place

for a breath or two  
alone with mind  
and your skin is wet  
and who is left to follow

follow whom where?  
Becoming blissful, a believer  
catches careless Charity  
dancing down divinity,

every elementary event  
festive, faith-fraught,  
gather contingent glories  
half heaven half here.

26 September 2003



## CHROMOPHONE

Each vowel nucleus maps a color —  
*chromophone*, analyze a text so,  
color map of poetry.

26 IX 03

## **WHAT COLOR WOULD YOU BE IF YOU WERE HOME**

What color would you be if you were home  
and what would your mother say about your hair

can we walk on wet grass with dry hot feet  
are we animals of the environment after all  
and not the purple princesses we meant?

It still is morning Mass, you're the bread  
and I'm the wine and by the end of it  
there be no more of such  
temporary commodities as you and me.

But something's left that will miss the pale  
presence of your body and maybe even my  
hot exhausted blush, bottling ecstasy so many years.

26 September 2003

## THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM

Was it a bathroom much in need of new grout  
or a pot of oatmeal ready to be served  
when the phone went off and The Agenda  
changed, how cold and thick things are now  
aren't they compared to London in the heyday  
when you could walk along the Serpentine  
re-hearing seldom performed operas in your head  
and hardly anybody played softball in the park.  
Bark. Dark. Car is what care does  
or did when we spoke English, there  
or anywhere, real estate men in funny clothes  
buying the ground out from under your feet  
but what were you doing there anyhow,  
wouldn't you feel more at home in Switzerland,  
a country that is feminine in most languages  
but we have no sex in ours?

26 September 2003

## **LOW FINANCE**

Persuading people to give you their money  
is probably why we have money in the first place,  
cheat and be cheated. It's hard to cheat a stone  
and you need a small army to steal a farm.  
But money unhinges our relationship with things.  
We want their oil, they want Madonna,  
a want once acquired hardly ever goes away.  
To hear a voice that's not your own,  
to go somewhere your feet can't take you —  
all the trickery amounts to that. For that  
we weave our flags around the fallen.

26 September 2003

## **CORVIDAE**

Imagine the sudden rapture  
of silence when the crow  
falls low from the cloud  
and the hawk flees so the air  
is monstrously clear.

They protect all living things  
and guide your feet  
if you'd only listen. Deaf,  
what I miss most:  
wind chimes. Crow caw.

26 September 2003

## TRANSLATION CONFERENCE

A plane, as of being,  
being there. In the old  
seminary Morningside Heights  
morning after morning  
I took the paper cup of coffee  
the vague sweet roll  
out onto the winter grass  
and talked to the scholar  
woman from Wales in the cloister  
garden, a reformation  
garden with no herbs  
no flowers and I thought  
about somebody a lot  
and now I can't remember who.

26 September 2003



## **THE MURDER VICTIM LEAVES A CLUE**

I last long enough to tell who  
killed me, but what does it matter,  
my life killed me, time  
killed me, the telephone that rang  
killed me, the telephone that didn't.

26 September 2003

## DREIVIERTELTAKT

So much as some of a waltz of it  
casting outside the highly polished  
escape machinery the ancient  
clockmaker kept fixing every dawn  
so that something kept coming up  
out of the sea annoying him  
eventually with its blue the way  
a musician is secretly vexed  
to recall that inside the wood of his violin  
a tone is waiting and has been waiting  
since the beginning of time or maybe  
just the felling of the tree, a sound  
peculiar to the wood itself that has  
nothing to do with him and although  
he owns the wood and plays like Lucifer  
he can't ever get that tone to sound  
or use it up. A sound belongs to its thing  
and music belongs to nothing —that's why  
it never lasts and people go on dying.

26 September 2003

---

Measure measure  
then forget forget.

Love love,  
that's all that's left.

27 IX 03

## **SLOW RIPENING THE PEOPLE**

Too many turns for one street  
so the neighbors sit around in bars  
or fountains pondering the light or dark  
how much of each, there's always  
a scientist in every group,  
a traveling man, a stay at home  
a priest. The women are far  
more different than the men are  
but seldom show it. The town  
is your town, the money  
on the marble table tops  
is mine, weird bills and worthless  
coins, the waiters move  
sleepy-eyed through unending rituals.  
Everybody has something they're running from,  
we are ennobled by what we can't make work.

27 September 2003

---

It's so stupid to be in love again  
but who would I be if I weren't?

27 IX 03

## IN THICK WOODS

In thick woods in tree fall  
and wind-felled trees to walk  
is mountain-climbing flat  
machete-less to move  
accepting the no-road as my road.

I'm not as afraid as I used to be  
I think. The history I compose  
has everybody in it, but all  
the names are changed. The firehouse  
is the cathedral, the buildings  
are built of shadows,  
when they fall down they do not hurt,  
Job's in-laws are not crushed flat,  
through Milarepa's emaciated  
ribcage cold wind pronounces  
painlessly *something else*  
*is always on the prowl,*  
keep your eyes on that,  
the katydids' incessant whir  
means everybody's suffering  
and everybody's somewhere not.  
Shadows kiss your skin  
and stay, no matter how ugly  
I become the same wind loves me.  
Do I love more than you  
what happens? Or are you

the one who made this tangled  
mess around my life, burst  
pipes and noble walnut trees  
and underbrush too thick for foxes  
but not too thick for me  
married always to the intricate?

27 September 2003

## THE DECADES

What silenced Yeats  
encouraged me,  
the fall of appetite  
the public voice,

the way what I had said  
comes back subtly  
from mouths hard pressed  
to say it,

the glamorous interruptions,  
the peace of God.  
When I'm happiest  
I cannot rest,

and when desire least  
grasps what it conceives  
the shock of loneliness  
speaks a crowded word.

Enough to say to  
divide between us,  
no loaves, no fishes,  
no miracles

but in your mouth the taste of me.

27 September 2003